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INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0629
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0596
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0668
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000479

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA
LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR MILLER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KTIP](#) [KWMN](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: WOMEN'S ISSUES: IOM HALTS FUNDS TO LOCAL WOMEN'S
NGO

REF: A. DAMASCUS 00062
[1](#)B. DAMASCUS 00471

Classified By: CDA a.i. Raymond Maxwell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Maria Rumman, the Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Damascus, reported that IOM ceased making grant payments to the Association for Arab Women's Role Development (AWRD) in the first week of July because of its failure to implement and operate a shelter for victims of trafficking. The shelter, which officially announced its opening on December 31, 2008 (ref A) and which was partially funded under a PRM regional "Multi Action Program for Emergency Assistance for Iraqi Victims of Trafficking," has yet to admit a single refugee. Rumman told us the funds would remain on hold until AWRD addressed outstanding administrative issues and began admitting women.

[1](#)2. (C) IOM had coordinated and funded AWRD to implement a shelter for victims of trafficking in persons. We visited the shelter in January, at which time IOM and AWRD felt certain it would be open for business shortly (ref B). AWRD received "verbal support" from First Lady Asma al-Asad, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor donated the building space. A shelter for victims of domestic violence (Oasis of Hope), also administered by AWRD was located in the same building as the trafficking shelter.

[1](#)3. (C) IOM's assessment of AWRD tracks with what others have reported to Post about the NGO's general effectiveness. As previously reported (reftels), the Sisters of the Good Shepherd (SGS) have long suspected AWRD of having a dilettantish approach to the administration of both shelters. On multiple occasions the Sisters have sought to place women in the two AWRD shelters, only to be told that admittance of an individual would require a board members assent. To date, the SGS have never succeeded in placing a woman in either shelter. According to Maria Rumman, the shelter for domestic violence is open, but at present only has three women in residence.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: We commend IOM for halting funding to AWRD, given the poor management of the shelter, and for the continued energy IOM displays on raising trafficking issues with the SARG. Given the SARG's donation of the building for the victims of trafficking shelter and the willingness to facilitate AWRD's endeavor the gesture suggests, we do not suspect the shelter's failure to be anything but a product of AWRD's mismanagement and, perhaps, lack of commitment. End comment.
MAXWELL